

Farmers have told me time and again that this is going to be an extreme burden on their abilities to farm. Instead of taking the time to deal with proper farming methods, they are going to have to be bookkeepers. They are going to have to be accountants. This tax puts an undue burden on them. The farmers of Haldimand—Norfolk wanted me to express that to you, Sir.

As Ontario Federation of Agriculture president Brigit Pyke told the finance committee: "Their cash flow position could be considerably worsened, forcing them to borrow money in order to pay the tax." This is a real problem for agricultural communities.

Then there is the massive paperwork burden. As the president of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers put it: "We'll be doing our books every spring instead of riding a tractor".

Farmers already have a cash flow problem, as we have discussed in this House, and this government has decided to take away the interest free advances that farmers, especially in my riding, count on.

Now the government brings farmers the GST. With it, the money that farmers need to put out to get their crops planted and harvested will now be used to pay taxes. If they want rebates quickly, they will have to do their books on a monthly basis and they will never be compensated for this time and effort.

Farm equipment dealers told the finance committee that the GST will mean an additional \$40 million in interest and paperwork costs to their industry. Allen Hills of the Canadian Federation of Farm Equipment Dealers of Canada said: "We cannot afford to absorb any more costs. Either the farmers will pay or some dealers will have to go bankrupt".

The government is not totally heartless when it comes to farmers though. If farmers decide to give up the farm completely, to sell all their land to another farmer or a relative, or if they are forced out of the business, then they do not have to pay GST. But if farmers decide to stay on the farm and try to make a go of it by selling off part of their land to a developer or to any other business to pay for the additional costs of farming that the GST will force upon them, the sale will then be subject to the GST.

The government has stated that basic food prices will not rise as a result of the GST. But if the costs, in both time and money, of growing food rises, surely either the

food prices will rise or the burden will be put on the farmer.

As badly off as the farmer will be, he will not be alone. As I said, I have had many discussions with different seniors groups in Haldimand—Norfolk and, quite frankly, Sir, they are outraged with this tax. They have lost respect and confidence in this government. The government that told them that social programs were sacred was the same government that attacked our elderly with the clawback and is now attacking them with the GST.

I and my caucus have met with different seniors organizations. Jean Woodsworth, president of the One Voice Seniors Network, said: "The tax on goods and services means hardship on seniors. It seems that low and middle-income seniors will be pushed toward poverty. The proposed tax credits do not reassure them—meanwhile, wealthy Canadians will be paying proportionately much less, and that's just not fair."

The GST proposal is not fair. It is not fair to seniors, it is not fair to farmers and it is not fair at all to the small business people, especially those in my riding.

I had a meeting recently with them in Simcoe where we discussed this tax. Quite frankly, 99.9 per cent of them were against the GST. They had very valid reasons. They were concerned by the cost that the GST would put upon their small businesses, which now need cash flow. They are concerned that government programs to assist them with purchasing things like cash registers will not be in place and that the cost of maintaining this GST will be much more than any rebate that the government gives to them, and they voiced these concerns to me. Mr. Bulloch, who appeared before the committee, gave many differing reasons why small business was against the tax. I do not want to go through them, but I do want to quote from a speech of his in which he outlines the stand of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. He said:

The measures proposed to assist small businesses with implementing the tax—would be a reasonable attempt to offset the regressive compliance implications of a single-tiered sales tax. They do not, however, begin to offset the actual costs that will be imposed on small firms by a two-tiered tax system.

• (1220)

Even the government and the Minister of Finance, early on indicated that they would not bring in a two-tiered tax system. It was his idea that if you could negotiate with the provinces and get some sort of agreement on this, then that would be the best approach to take. Quite frankly, he has failed to do that. As a